

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON

# Children in Art

SELECTED WORKS OF ART FROM THE TOUR



## Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son

1875

by Claude Monet

(pronounced: Mow-nay)

(French, 1840–1926)

■ In this scene perched atop a flowering hillside, the French impressionist painter Claude Monet has depicted his wife Camille and their son, Jean turning to look back at the artist, whom we cannot see. The impressionists earned their name from a shared interest in recording fleeting “impressions” of modern life, both in the city and in the surrounding areas that could be accessed by train. Here Monet captures his wife and son walking along a grassy slope in Argenteuil, a suburb of Paris. Working in this rural setting, Monet could focus on recording atmospheric effects, particularly changing patterns of light.

Monet’s painting conveys a sense of arrested motion. The wind appears to swirl around Camille, and the breeze lifts her skirts to the left and blows the veil on her hat straight back to the right. The flowers in the foreground seem to be caught in the shifting air current as well. The green stalks on the left move toward the left, while the flowers in the center ground, immediately in front of Camille, seem to blow in the opposite direction. Young Jean seems not to feel the wind at all. His arms rest by his side, and his hat is undisturbed. The depiction of a quick gust corresponds to the spirit of freshness and spontaneity communicated by the painting as a whole. Monet’s brushstrokes are broad and feathery. Their shifting direction conveys the movement of the greenery on the hill, the motion of Camille’s skirts, and the flow of clouds overhead. The colorful palette evokes sunlight altered by wispy clouds. Camille’s parasol indicates a desire to ward off the sun’s rays, while its green shade echoes the lush vegetation beneath her feet.

### QUESTIONS

1 Monet’s painting captures a family outing. Does it remind you of any pictures of your own family? Explain.

- 2 Monet wanted us to see his brushstrokes. Are they all the same? Can you find short and long brush strokes? What about thick and thin? What do they describe?
- 3 How many different colors can you find in Madame Monet’s “white” dress? What do they represent?

## The Washington Family

1789–1796

by Edward Savage

(American, 1761–1817)

■ This painting portrays a famous American hero and his family. George Washington wears a uniform that reminds us that our first president was also Commander-in-Chief of the Army. The boy and girl are George Washington Parke Custis and his sister, Eleanor (Nelly) Parke Custis, grandchildren of Martha Washington. The Washingtons adopted the children after their parents died. Behind Martha Washington stands William Lee, who worked for the Washington family.

The Washingtons are at their home, Mount Vernon, on the banks of the Potomac River. Martha points with her fan to the map of the city of Washington that will soon be built in the distance as the new nation’s capital. But note carefully, no one is looking at the map or at one another. Each family member is standing or sitting very properly in his or her best clothes, as though formally posed for the artist Edward Savage to complete the picture of our first “First Family.”

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Look at the way the artist has portrayed George Washington. What are some words that describe him?
- 2 Imagine you were one of the children in this picture. What would life be like in the family of a real hero? Could this help account for the family’s lack of familiarity in the portrait?
- 3 Do you have an “extended family”? Who are they?

## Return of the Prodigal Son

1667/1670

by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

(pronounced: Moo-ree-yo)

(Spanish, 1617–1682)

■ The biblical account of the prodigal son, illustrating repentance and forgiveness, is Jesus' parable of a man and his two sons, found in Luke 15: 11-32. The younger son asked for his inheritance early and traveled to another country, where he squandered his wealth. Regretting his former extravagance, the boy returned home and offered himself to his father as a servant. Murillo illustrated the climax of the story—the homecoming, just before the older brother arrived at the welcoming feast. In front of the family's majestic mansion, the father, in a gesture of forgiveness, embraces his young son, while servants bring new clothes to replace the prodigal's rags.

Murillo was left an orphan at the age of ten and was raised by his sister and her husband in the Spanish city of Seville. His fame came primarily from the devotional images he painted for religious institutions. The use of realistic poses and dramatic lighting added to his popular appeal. In this picture, Murillo used bright colors against a dull background to bring our attention to the main characters. The father and son are centered in the composition and are painted in the lightest colors. The drama is further enhanced by the placement of architectural elements in the background, which creates a feeling of depth.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Look at the hands of the father and son. What do their gestures express?
- 2 Is everyone reacting the same way?
- 3 What lesson does this painting teach about going out to seek your fortune?

## Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)

1873–1876

(detail, cover)

by Winslow Homer

(American, 1836–1910)

■ A man and three boys have been out for a fine day of sailing and fishing off the New England coast. You can see they were successful because many silver fish lie in the bottom of the boat. It is sunny, breezy weather; the boat speeds along, kicking up spray at the bow and leaving choppy waves behind. The tilted boat and its off-center placement lend a sense of movement to the scene, but the painting is balanced by the distant schooner, the cloud-filled sky, and the horizon line on the other side of the picture.

The artist Winslow Homer created a wide variety of popular images. This painting was completed in 1876, at a time when he was concentrating on lively scenes of sports and recreation. These images perfectly suited the prevalent post-Civil War nostalgia for a simpler life.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Where do you see a warm color in this cool, blue painting?
- 2 What would happen if the boys sat on the opposite side of the boat?
- 3 If you could pick an outdoor activity to do with some friends and an adult, what would you choose?

# Information

## TRANSPORTATION

Metro stops are Judiciary Square (red line), Navy Memorial/Archives (yellow/green line), and Smithsonian (orange/blue line).

Metered street parking is available along the Mall for cars and vans. Buses may let students off at the entrance noted on your confirmation sheet. Parking for buses is allowed on Independence Avenue next to the Washington Monument.

*Please check your school tour confirmation letter for the location where your tour will begin. If you are unable to keep this appointment, notify the Tour Scheduler at 202.842.6249 as soon as possible.*

## LUNCH FACILITIES

Groups may not bring sack lunches. Please note this change in policy.

There are no special lunch facilities for school groups. Groups may purchase their lunches from the full-service cafeteria. Group meal plans can be arranged by calling 202.216.2480.

Restrooms are located by the cafeteria and near main entrances of the Gallery.

## WHAT TO BRING

Hand-held cameras, pencils, and pads are allowed in the permanent collection areas, but not in special exhibitions. The use of a tripod, easel, or ink and chalk

drawing materials is prohibited without special advance permission. Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the Gallery. Visitors may not wear backpacks in the galleries; backpacks must be checked or carried by hand. We recommend that students leave their backpacks at school or on the bus to prevent entry delays. For further information on museum visitor policies, please see: <http://www.nga.gov/ginfo/policies.htm>

## MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS AND REPRODUCTIONS

Postcards are available in the museum shops for 50 cents each; 11 x 14-inch reproductions are \$5.00 each. Museum shops are located in the East Building Concourse (next to the cafeteria), and on the ground floor of the West Building between the 4th and 6th Street entrances.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The 6th Street entrance to the West Building at Constitution Avenue and the 4th Street entrance to the East Building each have ramps to accommodate visitors in wheelchairs. The 6th Street entrance may be used as a drop-off and pick-up location. Please inform your docents prior to your tour of any special needs for your students.

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